

SPRING 2026

# Communio

That All May Be One  
Newsletter of the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region  
Secular Franciscan Order



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Spirituality



Formation



Fraternity



Apostolate



# SPRING 2026

## Ministers Letter Feb 2025

A Blessed Time to be a Franciscan

Greetings my dear sisters and brothers,  
May the Lord grant you his peace this Lent and Easter Season.

As I continue to read and pray over Pope Leo's Exhortation *Dilexi te* and reflect on the magnitude of the Pope's declaring this the Jubilee of St Francis, I can't help but think, we as sisters and brothers who follow Saints Francis and Clare are truly blessed. Well yes, we are always truly blessed as through our Baptism we are sisters and brothers to Our Lord Jesus Christ first and foremost.

If you've read *Dilexi te*, you know of the strong presence of Franciscan charisms. The title *Dilexi te* "I Have Loved You" (Rev 3:9) reflects our Franciscan theology that, Jesus the Son of God was always going to come because he loved us.

Pope Leo calls out both Francis and Clare. Francis as the icon of the spiritual springtime in the thirteenth century. Clare's spirituality in faithfully maintaining the ideal of radical poverty. Lives of continuous emptying and giving of oneself to the poor. Lives we try to imitate in the twenty first century.

Pope Leo declaring the Jubilee of St Francis in honor of his 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death. This year especially, we have the opportunity to help educate and lead others into the *Dilexi te* exhortation to love, by simply being whom we are as Franciscans. We are called to be men and women who care for the poor and marginalized, have a strong prayer life, we welcome others into our fraternities and continue to grow in our own formation.

This is truly a blessed time to live out our Franciscan Profession. For those of us who have Professed our commitment and those who are discerning, please remember we say Yes 3 times once to each of the questions below.

Do you wish to embrace the gospel way of life by following the example and words of St. Francis of Assisi, which is at the heart of the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order?

Do you wish to be faithful to this vocation and to practice the spirit of service proper to Secular Franciscans?

Do you wish to bind yourselves more closely to the Church, and to work intently to rebuild the ecclesial community and fulfill its mission among all people?

If you feel that your Yes has led you to a deeper faith, a deeper willingness to serve the poor and work to rebuild the church, then you will agree this is an especially blessed time to be a Franciscan and share this love and joy.

God bless us all,

Ellen

Your sister in Christ





## When Loving Neighbor Disturbs Plans

By Lynn Oeser OFS

In the early documents we hear the stories of St. Francis and those whom he encountered. All of these stories of encounter encompass the holy and true command: Love God with whole heart and love neighbor as yourself.

Much of our outreach in loving neighbor is scheduled with time set aside. The challenge for me is when love is not convenient. Was the good Samaritan inconvenienced in his travels when he helped the beaten man? My most haunting regrets are in what I have failed to do.

I recall a few years back we had a neighbor who was in a wheelchair. He was strong, independent, and would give the shirt of his back to help a neighbor. He was often seen changing tires for folks who hit a bad spot of the road near the front of his house.

There was one Sunday after an ice storm that left the power and phone lines out in our neighborhood. We had made commitments at the church that day that entailed ministry and outreach. We got our kids out, honored the Lord and our commitments and rested in a sense of fulfillment.

Until.....we later learned from our neighbor that had been was trapped in his house because the doors and windows were frozen shut. He was ok, and told the story in his joyful good-humored way, but my heart was convicted and sad. How could we have failed to see that our neighbor may have needed help? Not only did we neglect to walk over and check on our neighbor, we failed to even think of it. We didn't think of it because it wasn't planned. We were blinded by the "important" good works that we had to get to.

I learned from that day to set out to seek and see the Lord in encounter with the neighbor in my sight. It may be a little wave, a prayer, an errand or something a little more inconvenient (or very inconvenient).

Pope Leo exhorts us in both in [Delexi te](#) and in the [Decree for the Jubilee year of St. Francis](#) to see and our neighbor as St. Francis did; and in the Prologue to our Rule, St. Francis exhorts us to produce worthy fruits of penance.

Dear Lord, in this Jubilee Year of St. Francis open the eyes of my heart to see my neighbor. Help me to love you most dearly and to love my neighbor. Show me your will for my actions to produce worthy fruits of penance that you will for me

## BSSF Formation

1. [BFFS Website](#).

For Regional Formation Guidelines check [the BSSF Website](#) or contact Regional Formation Director. The Website has many links.

2. BSSF Formation Forums

Formation Forums are one-hour sessions for BSSF Formation Directors, Formators and Spiritual Assistants. They are an opportunity for formators to be formed as addressed in "Forming the Formator" in the FUN Manual. They also offer a place of encounter for formators can get to know other formators in the region, to build community, to ask questions and to hear about upcoming events. All sessions begin at 7:30.

The tentative schedule follows.:

Feb 19, 2026	Formation Forum Th
Mar 18, 2026	Formation Forum W
April 15, 2026	Formation Forum Th
May 20, 2026	Formation Forum W
June 18, 2026	Formation Forum Th
July 22, 2026	Formation Forum W
July 29-Aug 2	Quinquennial
Aug 20, 2026	Formation Forum Th
Sept 11-13, 2026	ARG
Oct 21, 2026	Formation Forum W
Nov 19, 2026	Formation Forum TH
Dec 16, 2026	Formation Forum W
Aug 6-8, 2027	ARG

## HELP REQUESTED FOR THE ARG

Are you a survivor or the loved one of someone who survived or died in the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center, the Pentagon or on United Airlines Flight 93? Did you personally know **Father Mychal Fallon Judge**, OFM, who died in the attacks? Regional JPIC Animator Allison Salerno, OFS, is putting together a panel at the ARG on the 25th anniversary of the attacks To talk about spiritual lessons from that tragic day. . If you are interested, please email her at [allisonbsalerno@pm.me](mailto:allisonbsalerno@pm.me)

Are you an instrumentalist who would like to share your talents at ARG? We are going to have an hourlong sing-along Saturday afternoon and are looking for a handful of musicians to lead us in song. Please contact Regional JPIC animator Allison Salerno, OFS, at [allisonbsalerno@pm.me](mailto:allisonbsalerno@pm.me) to sign up.

## A Green Burial for One of Our Own



By Allison Salerno, OFS  
Regional JPIC Animator

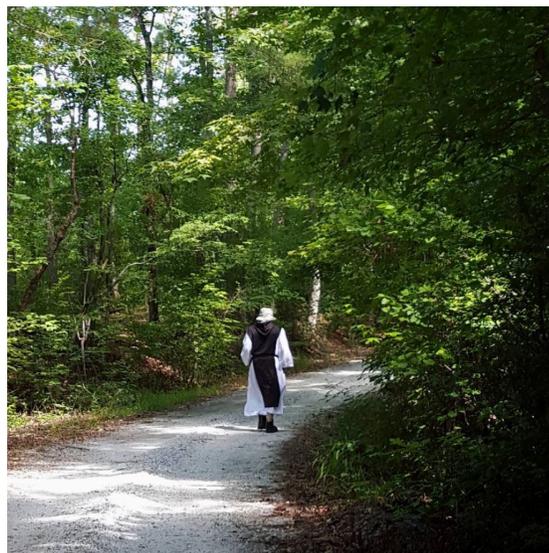
On February 2, I joined a group of Secular Franciscans at [Honey Creek Woodlands](#) for the graveside funeral service of [Dianne Ambrose, OFS](#), who had died five days earlier. Guided by a deacon, we stood on that sunny afternoon at her grave, in a forested landscape, praying and singing for our dear sister. I'd met Dianne when I was an inquirer in the now-deactivated San Damiano Fraternity in Athens, Ga. several years ago. Many Seculars knew Dianne through her loving service as formation director of the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region as well as historian for Secular Franciscans USA.

How apt it is that years ago Dianne, who died at age 60, had chosen Honey Creek as the final resting place for both her late husband and herself; its ethos perfectly aligns with Franciscans' profound respect for all God's creation.

Honey Creek is a place of natural beauty in Conyers, Georgia. It sits within the Monastery of the Holy Spirit's 2,300 acres and borders the 40,000 acre Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area. All souls buried here must have a natural burial; that is, bodies are not embalmed and instead are placed in a shroud or, as in Dianne's case, a simple biodegradable casket. Most funerals happen no more than five days after death.

Why does this kind of burial matter? The [Green Burial Council](#) explains: "Green burial is a way of caring for the dead with minimal environmental impact that aids in the conservation of natural resources, reduction of carbon emissions, protection of worker health and the restoration and/or preservation of habitat." I was puzzled why they said such burials would protect worker health. Then elsewhere in their website I learned that "Embalming fluid is usually comprised of the carcinogen chemical formaldehyde, which has been proven to pose health risks in funeral homes. A [study by the National Cancer Institute released in late 2009](#) revealed that funeral directors have a much higher incidence of myeloid leukemia. Another study completed in 2015 by the [Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery & Psychiatry](#) indicates a three times higher incidence of ALS, Lou Gherig's Disease, than in the general public."

Besides the loving gesture such a burial is, what also moves me is that the Cistercian monks who call the monastery home welcome people of all faiths and no faith to be buried there; the monks regularly walk the grounds of Honey Creek and pray for the souls of the dead.



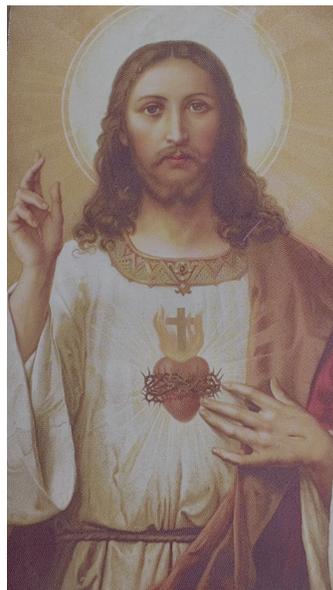
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In my decade of living in Georgia, I have visited the monastery several times; for retreats, for a Christmas concert, for hiking the trails that run through the grounds, and for saying prayers for a Franciscan brother or sister who has encountered Sister Death and entered the Mystery.

*In your hands, O Lord,  
we humbly entrust our Sister Dianne.  
In this life you embraced her with your tender love;  
deliver her now from every evil  
and bid her eternal rest.*

*The old order has passed away:  
welcome her into paradise,  
where there will be no sorrow, no weeping or pain,  
but fullness of peace and joy  
with your Son and the Holy Spirit  
forever and ever.*

**R/.** Amen.



### *In Loving Memory*

**Diane Louise Ambrose**

**May 31, 1965  
January 28, 2026**

### **Hail Mary**

Hail Mary, full of grace  
the Lord is with thee: blessed  
art thou among women and  
blessed is the fruit of thy  
womb, Jesus

Holy Mary, Mother of God  
pray for us sinners now,  
and at the hour of our death  
Amen

Platt's Funeral Home

## **Earth Day at St. Francis Springs Prayer Center: Exploring the Canticle of the Creatures and the Land of St. Francis Springs Wednesday April 22, 2026**



The Earth Day presentation, led by Larry Petrovick, will include a morning session (11:30-12:30), followed by lunch (12:30), and an afternoon session (1:30-3:00). The suggested donation is \$25. The celebration of the Springs 21<sup>st</sup> Anniversary will be at the 10am Mass.

St. Francis had a deep relationship, a kinship with Creation—with both the living and nonliving creatures of the natural world. During this retreat, we will have opportunity to explore the Canticle, the Land of St. Francis Springs, and other invitations that speak to us. We'll be invited to listen to one another, to be in silence, and to encounter nature outdoors or indoors. We'll reflect on images or stories and have the opportunity to journal and share thoughts in small groups and in a large group setting. The Canticle of the Creatures and the Land of St. Francis Springs are alive with the wisdom of St. Francis and the Bible. Come be a part of this one-of-a-kind exploration.

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About our facilitator, Larry Petrovick:

The heart of Larry's spiritual journey is integrating his experience as a conservationist with his appreciation of St. Francis of Assisi. He is a member of St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church in Raleigh, NC, has served in Creation Care Ministries and as a farm coach, and has been a long-time volunteer at St. Francis Springs Prayer Center. During his 40-year career as a conservationist, Larry worked to conserve the natural world in various roles in wildlife, forestry, agriculture, and conservation agencies in government. As a Courage and Renewal Facilitator, and through his Inspiring Courage Consulting LLC, he consults with nonprofits, faith communities, and businesses, to help them understand and apply lessons from the natural world that can mutually benefit the human-earth relationship. He has led spiritual formation retreats for over 30 years.

Follow this link to register:

[Earth Day at St. Francis Springs](#)

### **The Year of St. Francis: A Time of Opportunity**

Submitted by Frances Acosta, OFS  
Regional Councilor for Area 4

As Secular Franciscans, we stand at a unique and meaningful moment in the life of the Church: the Year of St. Francis. This year is not merely a celebration of a famous saint who has found his way, almost by chance, into our gardens; it is a gracious invitation—personal, communal, and profoundly spiritual. It calls us to pause, to breathe more deeply, and to listen once again to the living God who spoke to Francis in the quiet, weathered stone of the little church of San Damiano. The seraphic Father whom we daily strive to emulate in word, prayer, and simple acts of compassion.

In this special year, we are challenged not only to *celebrate* St. Francis but to allow him to *challenge* us. To let his radical simplicity, his joyful humility, and his unshakable devotion to Christ disturb us in the best possible way.

Do you wish to embrace the gospel way of life by following the example and words of St. Francis of Assisi, which are at the heart of the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order? Yes, this is what I want. Sound familiar? Do you remember saying these words aloud, sincerely, or with a trusting heart? I know I do. My Brothers and Sisters, Francis always walked in community and modeled companionship. This year invites us to build deeper bonds with one another—to pray together more faithfully, serve together with greater generosity, and accompany one another more intentionally on our shared journey of faith. One of the greatest opportunities of this year is the chance to evangelize—not with many words, but with our Franciscan presence.

Evangelization is not about convincing; it is about revealing—letting others glimpse the Gospel alive in us. Through our presence, our fraternity, our service, and our humility, we show **who we are** and **Whose we are**.

Being a Secular Franciscan for me means living the Gospel where we are — in our families, workplaces, ministries, and everyday encounters. It calls us to continual conversion, so that what began as joyous commitment does not become complacency. Let this Year of St. Francis reignite the fervor and humility we felt when we first professed our way of life.

Among the many sayings attributed to St. Francis, one stands apart for its clarity and quiet strength:

**“I have done what is mine; may Christ teach you what is yours.”**

Francis does not say, “Do what I did.” He says, in essence, “I was faithful to my calling. Now discover yours.” The beauty of this line lies in its freedom: Francis doesn’t impose his path; he invites each of us to find our own. He doesn’t command; he gently encourages. He doesn’t burden; he liberates us to respond with our gifts and circumstances in mind.

In that spirit, the Year of St. Francis becomes more than a historical observance—We honor Francis best not by imitating his exact steps, but by following Christ with the same openness and devotion that Francis embodied. **“All the darkness in the world cannot extinguish the light of a single candle”**. May we as Secular Franciscan be that light that shines in the darkness.



For information on the Jubilee year and designated pilgrimage sites please follow this link:

**JUBILEE YEAR OF ST. FRANCIS**

**DECREE OF POPE LEO**

**800 YEARS OF ST. FRANCIS**

## Remembering Deacon Thomas Shaver, OFS

Submitted by Margi Williams OFS  
Minister, Stigmata of St. Francis Fraternity, Johns Creek, GA  
Regional Counselor, Area 2



Our beloved brother, Deacon Thomas Shaver, OFS, met Sister Death about one year ago on April 22, 2025. Deacon Tom, as we called him, is greatly missed – both personally and as a Fraternity. He shaped our Fraternity of the Stigmata of St. Francis. Concurrently, he shaped who I am – as a Secular Franciscan; as Minister of our Fraternity; and as a Councilor of the Regional Executive Council for the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region.

Although Sister Death has removed him from our presence, his influence continues both on our Fraternity and on all of us who knew him. We remember him for being strong in his beliefs and for his love of prayer, especially the Franciscan prayers including the Liturgy of the Hours. He taught us the correct way to pray the Liturgy of the Hours and he introduced us to other Franciscan prayers as outlined in the Appendix of the Ritual. For all these prayers, he taught us to slow down to focus on and to absorb the words.

We remember him for his love of the Gospel for as he said “there is only one Gospel”. Our Fraternity is continuing the Gospel Ongoing Formation study that he started to help us live “Gospel to Life; Life to Gospel”. This study follows our Ongoing Formation study of the Rule, which he insisted we needed and which helped us to learn the basics of living as Secular Franciscans.

What also continues to guide us was, as he often said, “We are not Republican or Democrat; liberal or conservative, but Christocentric”. This means that we need to maintain Christ and the Gospel as the foundation of all we do both in our daily lives, our lives as members of society and as Secular Franciscans.

Additionally, Deacon Tom was beloved by many of you in the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region. He was ordained to the Diaconate on May 23, 1987 and was appointed Regional Spiritual Assistant May 13, 2018. As the Regional Spiritual Assistant, he drove many hours and many miles around the Region for Elections and Visitations. However, he had to resign as Regional Spiritual Assistant after he had a horrific automobile accident on June 17, 2023 while driving home from a Fraternity election in Tennessee. At the 2023 ARG, he was honored for his many years of service to the Region. Afterwards, although he was no longer the Regional Spiritual Assistant, Deacon Tom continued to serve with Spiritual Assistant Formation, a role he held for many years. The Spiritual Assistant Formation class was based on what Fr. Linus DeSantis, OFM Conv. had pulled together. Fr. Linus was our Regional Spiritual Assistant for about two decades and Deacon Tom often spoke of Fr. Linus’ influence on his life and the Spiritual Assistant Formation Program.

Deacon Tom, may you rest peacefully in the loving arms of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and of our Seraphic Father, St. Francis. You remain in our hearts and in our prayers.

## A SAINT AMONG US

Submitted by Hernan Sabio, MD, OFS  
Fraternity of St. Clare

As a young boy growing up in the northernmost country of South America, Venezuela, I heard from my grandmother about a medical doctor who cared for the poor who were sick. He did it without charging them and he would even buy their medicines. He was a contemporary of my grandmother, and both lived in a working-class neighborhood in Caracas, the capital city of Venezuela. The stories of this generous and compassionate physician were many and I heard them as firsthand narratives from my grandmother (Yaya) multiple times. Nourished by the wonderful stories about this charitable physician, who in addition to caring for the poor was also a professor at the medical school and who had studied abroad in France and Germany, I allowed Dr. Jose Gregorio Hernandez to become someone to admire and an inspiration in my life.

Dr. Jose Gregorio Hernandez was born on October 26, 1864, in a small town in the Andes mountains in western Venezuela. After his early studies, he lived in Caracas, where he studied medicine and taught at the medical school of the university in Caracas. He studied bacteriology and radiology in Germany and France and brought knowledge of these, at that time new sciences, to his homeland. He was a very pious man who attempted to enter the seminary. His calling, however, was as a Secular Franciscan and doctor. He was dedicated to helping the poor and came to be known as the doctor of the poor.

He died on June 29, 1919, when he was hit by a car while buying medication for a patient. His remains are in the Iglesia de Nuestra Señora de La Candelaria (the church of our Lady of Candelaria), which is the parish where my birth was registered 27 years after his death. His legacy greatly influenced my decision to pursue a medical career.

When I “fast forward” to my years of grey hair and hopefully some wisdom, I again encounter Dr. José Gregorio Hernandez. At the beginning of initial formation, I learn that the late Pope Francis has beatified my childhood role model and now colleague. Surprisingly, I then discovered that he was a professed Secular Franciscan. This wonderful and lifelong encounter with him develops further when two months ago on October 19, 2025, Dr. José Gregorio Hernandez is canonized by Pope Leo XIV, thus becoming the most recent Secular Franciscan saint and the first saint from Venezuela.

I remain joyfully grateful for the inspiration the saintly physician Dr. Jose Gregorio Hernandez gave me in discovering and following my medical vocation. Even more so, in how, unaware to me, my Franciscan vocation developed under his silent shadow.

## The (Cat)holic is Out of the Bag

Submitted by Tori Walters, OFS, Crucified Christ Fraternity

When I first joined the Secular Franciscans, I found out about the Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Committee and I was over the moon. If you remember my last article, yes I'm hoping it was so fantastic it remained in your memory, I am taking online classes at Dayton University for my Certificate in Social Justice and feel compelled to share what I have learned with all-especially Catholics. Catholic Social Teaching is the Church's best kept secret. I am letting it out. Mind you, most of what I write is backed up in Papal documents, and encyclicals dating back to Pope Leo XII with *Rerum Novarum* to Pope St. John Paul II to Benedict XVI. Unfortunately, I am finding a mostly superficial practice and education in churches and among Catholics. This extends to so much more than tossing a few extra bucks into the collection basket at Mass or the extended version of pray, pay, and obey. It is the way of life for all Christians in the true imitation of Christ, which as Secular Franciscans is front and center of our lives. Francis understood that in order to live as perfect a life here as we can, we need to look to Christ and imitate him, making his life our own. We can't do that if we don't fully understand the basics and then cherry-pick out what we do understand. To begin, I'll share some definitions and move onto the Themes.

Catholic Social Teaching, Catholic Social Doctrine, Catholic Social Justice, Catholic Social Thought, it has so many names and the misnomer is that they can be used interchangeably. While they do overlap, each term has its own definition and context. The main ones are:

Catholic Social Doctrine: Body of teachings and principles by the Church, first and foremost human dignity.

Catholic Social Teaching: The Church's teaching on social issues. These are the documents and encyclicals mentioned before.

Catholic Social Justice: Action taken on these issues to find out why they are happening and work to rectify. Over the next months, we will look at the 7 Themes, which are pulled out of the above definitions, learning more about them and how we can be even better Secular Franciscans by understanding and practicing them. Pax et bonum.

## The Admonitions of St. Francis

*Translated from the Critical Latin Edition, edited by Fr. Kajetan Esser, O.F.M.*

### *Chapter XV. On peace*

"Blessed (are) the peacemakers, since they shall be called sons of God" (Mt 5:9). • Those truly are the peacemakers, who concerning all those things, which they suffer in this age, preserve peace in soul and body for the sake of the love (amor) of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

## FRATERNITY ACTIVITIES

### Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Fraternity

Christmas 2025 was the second year that Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament fraternity hosted a Drive-Thru Live Nativity in conjunction with the youth of Blessed Sacrament Parish in Alamance County, North Carolina.

With luminaries lighting the path to Bethlehem, our guests were welcomed by St Francis (Paul Bobak, OFS) with youth handing out booklets that told the story of the journey.

Lighted tents with colorful backdrops and joyful volunteers in costume enhanced the scene for each stop. First stop was Bethlehem (The House of Bread, complete with bakers).

Shepherds, including Cheryl Riley's (candidate, not pictured) husband and son kept the story alive as the journey continued.

The Wisemen tent with the backdrop of a starry night and our volunteers with their colorful costumes and gifts was a sight to behold.

The choir, including Mary Roach, OFS (pictured left, below) sang beautiful Christmas carols at the manger scene, but they could be heard throughout the entire Drive-Thru experience, proclaiming the joyful news in song!

The final tent, of course, was the manger scene, clearly seen from far away by the Star of Bethlehem, announcing Christ's presence. The scene was made complete with Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus along with angels, shepherds, a donkey and goats.



While this event is enjoyed by many, our fraternity is discerning if we will continue with this apostolate in 2026. Some questioned if participation was enough to warrant the hard work. It is a lot of work and many who were involved behind the scenes setting up, cleaning up, serving refreshments to volunteers, assisting

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volunteers with costumes, etc. are not pictured. If we continue, we will likely increase/change some promotion of the event.

Aside from the hard work though, there are some who are very much in favor of continuing with the event. One of our volunteers who was caught up in contemplation of the event that evening despite the bitter cold, with the children who were joyfully running around the tent, the choir singing praise to God, the people in the manger milling about smiling and chatting, was struck deeply with wonder and awe at the thought that this was how it was that night, a bit of ragtag, uncertainty, excitement and awe...a very human moment to welcome the most divine being to our earthly world.

With this experience, it was suggested that perhaps, if we offer this to our community again, we should consider a walk-thru Nativity, rather than a drive-thru to allow people time to contemplate and soak in the experience with awe and wonder.

Whatever we decide, this was a beautiful experience and something the entire fraternity was able to do together.

### **Blessed John Duns Scotus Fraternity, Murrells Inlet, Sc**

#### Sharing Our Joy

Our Christmas morning celebration with Coastal Autism Academy was exceptionally joyous this year. The Precious Blood of Christ Women's Club provided a grant of \$3000 to enable us to provide gifts for the 44 children in residence. We had purchased fleece blanket kits and several church groups including the Prayer Shawl Ministry and the Young Adult Group from Precious Blood of Christ as well as the Divorce Recovery Group from St. Michael's Catholic Church helped to tie the blankets—each knot represented a prayer for the child who received it. Walmart donated the breakfast food for us to prepare and serve. Our "crew" of volunteers included five from our fraternity, two from the Precious Blood of Christ Young Adult group and Santa. The children's excitement was contagious and made our Christmas morning complete!



Barbara Umpleby, Grayson Morrow, Mary Sacavage, Emma Morrow, Annamaria Guzzi, and Kathleen Barnes getting ready to serve breakfast.

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Santa (Charles Sacavage) giving gifts to the children.



Breakfast cooks, Eric Schwartzkopf, Charles Sacavage, and helper, Mary Sacavage.



front row: Marly Redden; back row: Marcy Brock, Paul Redden, Mary Sacavage

## PROFESSIONS



Eric Schwartzkopf and Annamaria Guzzi on the occasion of their profession, January 3, 2026, into Blessed Duns Scotus Fraternity



Witnesses sharing in the joy with Eric and Annamaria, including Regional visitors!. From left to right front row, Marly Redden, Kathleen Barnes, Mary Sacavage, Becky Bresnahan, Annamaria Guzzi, Joanie Penney, Kathy Lapsevich; row two: Barbara Umpleby, Lee Cunningham, Susan MacArthur, Ellen Ferrone, Eric Schwartzkopf, Paul DeStefano. Back row: Ted Penney. Missing from photo: Sr. Kathy Adamski, OSF.

# Shout Out Page:

In April 2025 Robert Pape, OFS Minister of St Thomas More Fraternity applied to National for an H2O grant to the support the Friends of Kambai Village and Beyond to help cover costs for a “bore hole” for the Mayian school. National granted a \$4,000 award in Nov 2025.

It is through the generosity of our fraternities and individuals which funds the H2O, please consider making a donation.



## H2O PROJECT



**Eric Best, OFS**  
is shaving to cure childhood cancers!

## St. Baldricks Foundation

Eric Best, OFS is a professed member of Our Lady of Good Counsel Fraternity in Greenville, SC



## The Beatitudes, St. Francis of Assisi, and Us

***“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
For they shall be satisfied.”***

By Cindy Craig, OFS

*Condensed from the original work, which appeared in St Elizabeth of Hungary fraternity Augusta newsletter.*

We have all experienced the physical pangs of hunger and/or thirst, physical manifestations of our bodily needs. But what does it mean to hunger and thirst for righteousness?

Biblically, righteousness is a focal concept of moral living, of being spiritually upright in accordance with God’s standards.

Both the Greek and Hebrew word for righteousness convey the concepts of justice, virtue, and uprightness. Pope Francis notes that in each of us there is a hidden yearning for light, a thirst and hunger for truth and good; which is the yearning, the thirsting, the hungering for God. It is an intense craving to restore the right relationship with God with love of and service to our fellow man.

Righteousness, then, is a disposition of the soul that seeks right order, justice, all goodness for all humanity, in other words, seeks the ultimate Good – God. Fr. Jeffrey Kirby (2017) refers to this yearning as the “God hole” that exists within each of us that can only be filled by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit; only He can satisfy that hunger, that thirst of the spirit.

Pope Francis (2020) addresses our role as church, “That is why the Church is sent forth to proclaim to all the Word of God, imbued with the Holy Spirit. Because the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the greatest righteousness that can be offered to the heart of humanity which has a vital need for it, even though it does not realize this.”

This Word satisfies the soul. Those who seek this righteousness will not be left unsatisfied. In our search for righteousness, we open ourselves to the workings of the Holy Spirit, the manifestation of Divine Love, Who plants the seeds in fertile souls to bear good fruit – seeking and seeing the hand of God in all creation, and demonstrating our love of God through self-donation to all.

St. Francis embodied this Beatitude and lived it to the fullest following his dramatic conversion. From the onset he directed his focus and gaze upon God, whether it was through ministering to the most marginalized of society, joyfully and exuberantly singing the glories of God as he toiled or travelled, or preaching the Word of God to men or simply the wild creatures of the field.

Francis preached the Gospel through his virtuous actions (using words when necessary), with sacrificial love, and his unceasing advocacy for a more just society that treated ALL mankind with the respect that a gift from God deserves. Seeking to restore a right relationship with God, he reprioritized his physical and spiritual life – rejecting the wealth of his family and embracing poverty to live in solidarity with those on the fringes or excluded from society; striving to follow closely in the footsteps of Jesus, emulating Him in all respects possible including his vulnerability and ultimately the stigmata.

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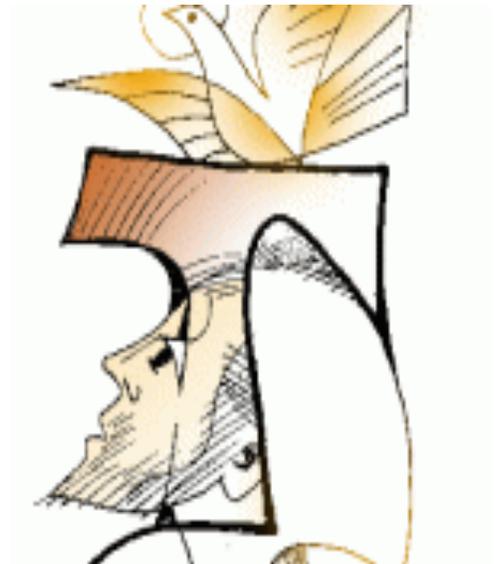
Like St. Francis, we are called to a reordering of our lives, physically and spiritually – a shedding of the superfluous and prioritizing the spiritual. We turn to God, our Creator and Redeemer who loves us unconditionally and longs for our fellowship with Him. We seek Him in the Most Holy Eucharist (regularly) – the Bread of Life, God Himself present among us. Strengthened by this nourishment, we open ourselves in prayer and conversation with God, listening intently for the quiet whisper of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

Energized by this, we study Holy Scripture feeding our minds with the holy wisdom of the Word of God – obedient to and dependent upon Him – a hunger and thirst expressed in our complete trust and true dependence on God’s divine Providence. We view the world through sharper eyes that seek a more just and charitable world, desiring to alleviate suffering in all forms.

### **The Gospel Through a Franciscan Lens**

Homilies from Fr. Christopher are available on the national website :

[Father Christopher's Homilies](#)





## Health Tips from Dr. T

Theresa L. Christie, MD, OFS  
St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity  
Augusta GA

### The Health Benefits of Fasting: What Current Research Tells Us

In recent years, fasting has moved from religious tradition and ancient practice into the spotlight of modern science. Researchers across the globe are now exploring how structured fasting—whether intermittent or prolonged—may offer a range of health benefits. Though fasting is not a one-size-fits-all approach and should be practiced thoughtfully, the growing body of research suggests it may promote **metabolic health, longevity, and even cellular resilience.**

Scientific studies generally focus on several main types of fasting:

Intermittent Fasting (IF): Alternating periods of eating and fasting, such as **16/8** (16 hours fasting, 8-hour eating window) or **5:2** (five days of normal eating, two days of significant calorie restriction)

Time-Restricted Eating (TRE): Limiting eating to a specific daily window, such as 6–10 hours.

Periodic or Prolonged Fasting: Fasting for 24 hours or more on an occasional basis.

Fasting-Mimicking Diets (FMD): Very low-calorie diets designed to mimic fasting effects while allowing limited nutrient intake.

One of the most consistent findings is that fasting can help improve metabolic markers. Fasting can improve insulin sensitivity and lower fasting blood glucose levels. A 2020 study in *Cell Metabolism* found that early time-restricted eating improved insulin sensitivity in adults with pre-diabetes. By reducing the eating window, fasting often naturally reduces calorie intake, leading to weight loss without a strict focus on counting calories. Fasting has been shown to lower triglycerides and improve cholesterol profiles, although more research is needed to clarify long-term effects.

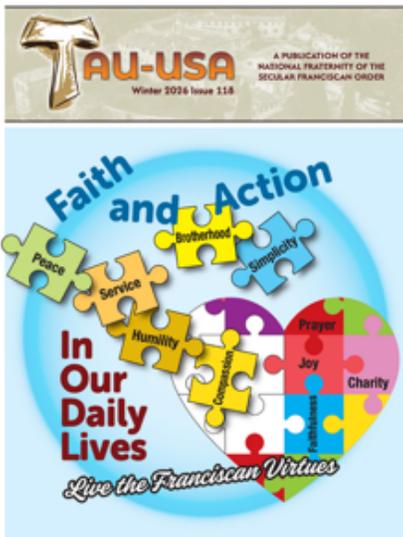
Beyond weight management, fasting influences health at a cellular level. Fasting promotes autophagy, the body's process of cleaning out damaged cells and recycling components. This may contribute to cellular rejuvenation and disease prevention. Several studies suggest fasting can reduce markers of inflammation, which play a role in many chronic diseases. Fasting may decrease oxidative stress, a factor in aging and degenerative conditions.

Fasting appears to benefit the brain in several ways. Studies indicate fasting stimulates the production of brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), which supports neuronal growth and plasticity. There are ongoing studies exploring the role of fasting in mental clarity and potentially delaying neurodegenerative diseases like Alzheimer's.

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While fasting offers potential benefits, it is not suitable for everyone. Those who should exercise caution or consult a healthcare professional before fasting include: Pregnant or breastfeeding women, children and adolescents, individuals with eating disorders and those with certain chronic conditions or on specific medications. Additionally, nutrient quality remains crucial—fasting is most effective when combined with a healthy, balanced diet during eating periods.

For now, when practiced safely and in combination with mindful nutrition, fasting can be a valuable part of a healthy lifestyle for many people.



## TAU-USA

## BREATHING ROOM



Please visit [21st Congress Secular Franciscan Order -](#)



# *Franciscan* **websites**



The Monastery of St. Clare: [Poor Clares](#)

Franciscan Friars: [Our Lady of Guadalupe Province](#)

Pilgrimages: [Franciscan Pilgrimages](#)

Justice and Peace: [Franciscan Action Network](#)

Secular Franciscan Order: [National Secular Franciscan Website](#)

Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis: [Regional Secular Franciscan Website](#)

Consilium Internationale OFS: [CIOFS](#)

TAU: [TAU-USA](#)



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